Stopping the Violence Against Women: The Movement From Intervention to Prevention

A Safety Program Report
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE OF CONTENTS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Gender Violence in the United States ...................... 1

History and Status of the Problem .......................... 2

What Needs to Be Done: ....................................... 4
Sharing Lessons Learned
  - How We Learn and Share
  - What We Have Learned

The Next Phase In Preventing Violence: ...................... 10
Engaging Communities As Key Assets
  - Redefining Strength and Masculinity
  - Preventing Child Sexual Abuse
  - Re-Envisioning Accountability

Fifteen Strategies for Moving ................................ 17
From Intervention to Prevention

Profile of the Safety Program ............................... 20

Grantees, FY 2005 .............................................. 22

Acknowledgements .............................................. 22

How to Contact Us ............................................ 22
Across America, communities are rallying to protest domestic violence and promote more positive behavior. Since 1973, the Ms. Foundation for Women has been a leader in the movement to end violence against women. It is the only national social change philanthropy dedicated to building a grassroots effort to address this issue. Until now, the antiviolence movement has relied heavily on two models of intervention: the criminal justice system and direct services for victims. Today, the Ms. Foundation is funding innovative programs to move society from intervention to prevention. This report presents 15 strategies to help make that possible.
In the middle of the night, a volunteer at a women’s crisis center picks up the phone. On the other end, a woman’s voice, terrified, the sound of a baby crying, loud banging on a locked bedroom door. “Help me, please!” the woman screams. “He’s trying to kill me!” It is a call repeated – with variations – around the country, around the clock.

Every two minutes, somewhere in America, a woman or girl is sexually assaulted. As many as one in three girls will be abused before the age of 18.

Most intimate partner violence is not reported to the police. Eighty percent of all rapes, 75% of all physical assaults, and 50% of all stalking perpetrated against women go unreported.

The number of men killed in intimate partner relationships has dramatically decreased over the past decade, while the larger number of women killed has remained the same.

Violence against women. It is publicly unacceptable and yet as entrenched as ever, an area in which our society has achieved so much and yet so little.

A great deal has been done to assist the victims of violence through the creation of shelters and crisis programs in every state across the country. Not a lot has changed, however, in the ways in which women experience violence, or with what frequency.

In the face of tremendous strides forward, violence is still an all-too-common underpinning. It is at the core of women’s inequality, severely limiting the options and opportunities in the lives of women and girls.

Gender violence – men’s violence against women – is as present as ever in our society, topping the list of women’s concerns countrywide.

The Ms. Foundation for Women is leading the way in funding grassroots efforts to address gender violence and to create a violence-free society.
**History and Status of the Problem**

Individual acts of violence against women have been normalized in societies around the world for centuries. The seemingly innocuous expression “rule of thumb,” for example, comes from English common law: A man could not beat his wife with a stick that was thicker than his thumb. Not until the late 20th century was violence against women addressed as a social issue.

Beginning in the 1970’s, a re-energized feminist movement in the United States helped women speak out about violence, identifying it not as a series of isolated, individual acts, but as a social construct. Early organizing efforts to create safe physical and emotional spaces for women launched a movement to end violence against women.

The Ms. Foundation for Women was an early leader in this movement:

- We were the first funder of battered women’s shelters in the mid-1970’s.
- One of the first funders of one of the earliest projects to counsel male batterers in 1979.
- Supported the first project for women with disabilities who are victims of abuse in 1981.
- The first foundation to publicly address incest.

Over the years, the Ms. Foundation has seeded organizations that have produced some of the antiviolence movement’s most innovative and effective programs and leaders. They include:

- The Pennsylvania Coalition Against Domestic Violence, Harrisburg, Pennsylvania. Established in 1976 as the first domestic violence coalition in the country, the organization has grown to include more than 60 community-based programs operating throughout the state. Its longtime leader, Susan Kelly-Dreiss, along with a handful of other committed women, successfully worked toward the passage of Pennsylvania’s first state domestic violence law. Today, the coalition is home to the National Resource Center on Domestic Violence, a clearinghouse of information on the topic and the Battered Women’s Justice Project, the first national special issue resource center on civil and criminal justice for women who are being abused.

- The Child Sexual Assault Prevention Project began in 1979 with seed money from the Ms. Foundation. The Ms. Foundation gave the project its first formal funding after learning of its comprehensive school-based program that raised the taboo topic of child sexual abuse. Today, the project has trained teams in 32 states and 18 countries, including Bahrain, Kyrgyzstan, and Saudi Arabia.

- INCITE! was created in 2000 from the first Color of Violence Conference, funded in large part by the Ms.
Foundation. With a growing number of local chapters, this organization is a national network of women of color focused on ending violence against women in all its forms. It is recognized as a groundbreaking force in the antiviolence movement, opening society’s eyes to the deeper connections between violence against women and state-sponsored violence such as the prison system.

The Ms. Foundation for Women is the only national social change fund dedicated to building a grassroots movement to end violence against women. For more than 32 years, we have put into practice our belief that a woman’s need for safety is fundamental to her ability to thrive. It has always been part of our strategy to encourage women to share their stories and find innovative ways of addressing domestic and sexual violence, child sexual abuse, trafficking, and sexual harassment that only a few decades ago were hidden, silenced, and not even named.

Until now, the antiviolence movement has relied heavily on two models of intervention: the criminal justice system and direct services for victims. Since the inception of this movement, a raised social consciousness and a demand for public accountability for women’s safety have led to a heavy emphasis on the police and legal systems to punish batterers. In addition, the need to protect women at crisis points has given birth to a system of shelters and social service strategies that have formed an important first line of defense in addressing rampant violence against women. Both types of interventions have been critically important and continue to save the lives of many women.

Yet, even in the wake of increased public awareness, groundbreaking policies, and a safety net of services, violence against women continues and is still firmly entrenched in our lives. What more needs to be done to achieve true progress?
The Ms. Foundation for Women supports innovative projects that teach us what works and why, and what to focus on next as we seek solutions. Over the past five years, the foundation’s Safety Program has awarded more than 100 grants in excess of $1.5 million to address violence against women. Among the unique factors in our approach to funding is that we involve survivors and their communities at the center of antiviolence work and we engage men as key constituents. We also strive to motivate the public to support and promote systems change through exchanging information and identifying concrete steps people can take in their communities.

How We Learn and Share

We believe that enabling dialogue, helping to push thinking forward, seeding new ideas, and supporting prevention models are imperative for creating a world without violence. To aid these processes, we incorporate a significant learning and documentation component into every phase of our work.

These learning activities include recording community-based approaches, assessing success in different communities, and ultimately sharing this knowledge with practitioners and other funders.

The Ms. Foundation is committed to disseminating its findings widely, through presentations at national conferences and in conference calls, as well as the production of audio tapes and printed reports that summarize key discussions. We also coordinate with our grantees to help them share our collective learning in national venues, with news media, and within local communities.

Examples of our learning tools include the following:

**Safety and Justice For All dialogue series.** In conjunction with our grant-making, the Ms. Foundation hosts a series of discussions on emerging issues with grantees and antiviolence practitioners through conference calls with experts. The response to our first two national conference calls demonstrated an astounding level of interest among callers and helped them to mobilize quickly in response to the information we provided. Telephone conference calls focused on the following subjects:

- **Child Witnessing of Domestic Violence: Who is Neglectful?** In 2002, we hosted a national conference call on the landmark lawsuit Nicholson v. Williams, the lawsuit that successfully challenged the child welfare system’s practice of removing children from battered mothers when their children have witnessed violence.
The response was overwhelming. The call brought together more than 400 listeners from 40 states – grassroots advocates, attorneys, DAs, legal services professionals, and members of the news media.

Accompanied by the plaintiff, the two lead attorneys described the legal basis for the lawsuit. They also explored organizing strategies for changing the practice of blaming battered mothers for their child’s having witnessed domestic violence. The conference call allowed advocates around the country to obtain important and timely information including a synopsis of the judge’s 183-page decision soon after its release, which helped them shape their local strategies around similar issues.

A written summary of the conference call is available.

■ DNA Technology. In 2003, we convened a conference call on DNA technology and the implications of using it in cases of sexual violence. This call addressed pending federal legislation, gave advocates information, and explored critical questions for advocates to consider in moving forward. DNA technology is hailed by law enforcement experts as a way to both positively identify perpetrators of crime and to exonerate the innocent.

As with any new technology, the use of DNA comes with dilemmas as well as promises. Our conference call explored both the benefits and pitfalls for sexual-assault survivors and their families in the expanded use of DNA collection, the impact on communities of color and other marginalized communities, and the safeguards needed to ensure that the use of DNA technology works to protect survivors while simultaneously preserving fairness and justice in the criminal justice process.

Feedback included comments like this one:

“We don’t get these opportunities often to tap into a whole nation of practitioners for two hours and listen to differing views and to express our own. The call was a great tool to get information in a short amount of time. It gave us an opportunity to stand out and caution people that when we do not critically examine all aspects of our strategies, we might sacrifice the marginalized for someone else’s interests.”

A written summary of the content is available.

Meetings. The Ms. Foundation for Women also brings activists together for deeper discussion on contemporary topics. Examples include:

■ Beyond Surviving: Toward a Movement to Prevent Child Sexual Abuse. Convening a group of 27 activists, survivors, and professionals, we envisioned what it would take to build a grassroots movement to end this devastating and hidden problem. Although child sexual abuse is often a precursor to abuse in adult life, our discussion revealed that there was little communication among the diverse groups of professionals doing
pieces of this work in the service provision and advocacy fields.

The report from this meeting is one vehicle toward creating a system for exchanging information. In support of a movement to end child sexual abuse, the publication names the challenges of this new work and provides more than 20 recommendations for creating new practices that could shift, refocus, and move this work forward collaboratively. Some of the recommended areas include public education, developing new language to allow discussion, and working with faith communities.

■ Safety and Justice for All: Examining the Relationship Between the Women’s Antiviolence Movement and the Criminal Legal System. This meeting discussed how battered women and their communities have been impacted when relying on the criminal legal system as the main solution to addressing violence against women. For example, women are now arrested for defending themselves, alongside their batterers, due to mandatory arrest policies that do not distinguish between levels of violence.

Leading activists struggled with questions of whether we have gone too far or not far enough in developing and utilizing legal strategies for addressing violence against women. We imagined what the future might look like if communities had the resources and decision-making power to decide on effective interventions that address the full complexities of their lives. We also outlined key challenges to working with the criminal legal system and ideas for new models of working with both the system and communities to end violence against women.

A report generated from this meeting, including discussion, continues to circulate widely, and staff have made multiple presentations based on these learnings.

What We Have Learned

Ask different questions to design different solutions. To get to solutions that will root out violence against women, we will have to ask risky questions that may threaten “business as usual,” as we redefine, reposition, and expand the parameters of our work. It means that while women have benefited from the leverage that current systems bring, new approaches are needed to actually stop the violence. Heavily weighted intervention strategies must be balanced with community voices, which should be utilized as a key asset rather than seen as a problem to be solved.

Our grantee groups are on the cutting edge of the work to end violence against women because they challenge themselves and others to ask different questions. They do this to reconcile the strategies used with the realities experienced by those in marginalized communities.

Sista II Sista, for example, is a collective of young women in Bushwick, Brooklyn that uses a variety of tools, from community-based research to
poetry slams and history workshops, to help analyze how violence is experienced and what they can do about it. Sista II Sista envisions a violence-free zone that is created by community will and maintained by community self-investment.

**All women must be heard.** Very little funding exists for programs addressing the multiple ways that violence entrenches itself in women’s lives across differences in geographical communities, or how factors such as race, culture, religion, disability, and class may impact prevention.

Grantees of the Ms. Foundation for Women have found that, in the fight to end violence against women, important voices – those of the women most in need – have been lost. Their input in shaping policies and programs will create more authentic, holistic solutions to preventing violence.

**Members of the Brooklyn-based Sista II Sista perform “Herstory” at the Sista Speak annual benefit at the Nuyorican Poets Cafe. Performers use the spoken word, music, dance, video and other creative elements to share their stories and describe the issues that are the organization’s focus. One goal is to create a violence-free zone in which violence against women will not be tolerated. Women are working to create safety within that area through intensive door-to-door neighborhood education, engagement, and organizing activities.**
This is what some of our grantees have told us.

“We found that Latino women and men responded better to the theme of creating healthy families, and not to preventing violence, so we entered into a conversation about women’s safety that way. We work with immigrant and border communities, and in the case of a mixed immigrant family, where some are documented or citizens and some are not, outreach and solutions to family violence have to be different. Anything related to the law raises concern and is not going to resonate. Also, solutions that promote separation of battered women from their homes, families, and friends do not work.”

— JEN MARGULIES, TEXAS COUNCIL ON FAMILY VIOLENCE

“The disability community has a long history of support from both government agencies and public and private charities. However, it is only when the disabled are given the opportunity to be heard that the horrifying epidemic of sexual assault against them is revealed. You can’t know what our issues are until we are able to speak and be seen as leaders in this work.”

— CAROLYN MORGAN, SPEAKING FOR OURSELVES

What we are hearing from these grantees and others points us toward a new phase of our work that will involve a greater spectrum of voices in every aspect of the antiviolence movement and a greater focus on prevention.

**Criminal justice and social service intervention is not enough.** Although thousands of women from all walks of life rely on current programs that already operate at maximum capacity, the greater majority of women never enter the doors of justice or social service systems. Among the reasons is the real fear that they may lose all control over the intervention once the system (whether criminal, legal, child welfare, mental health, or welfare) enters their lives. For example, some states have removed children from a battered mother because she “failed to protect them” from witnessing the violence. Police protection and prosecution are inconsistent across localities. In some areas, police and other law enforcement officials may ignore family violence law while in other areas, incidents between non-strangers are too readily categorized as “family violence,” leading to the arrests of survivors.

Many women, even those who do call on and rely on the police and shelter systems, say that they do not want to leave their communities to escape violence and that they see the police and shelters as last resorts. These responses are not indications of failure, but rather of the magnitude of work that lies ahead.

**The need now is to address the root causes of violence.** Violence against women emanates from intricate, entrenched, and unequal power relations that women face with men, their communities, their governments, and institutions. Violence against women, which includes physical as well as psychological
harm, is often embedded in the ways we teach our children; enforce gender roles; assign privileges; name our heroes and reward them; and define success, victory, and conquest in the world around us. It occurs in a broad context of inequality with regard to access to education, resources, decision-making power in private and public life, and access to both the knowledge of one’s rights to safety and venues for fighting for those rights.

The Ms. Foundation for Women believes that violence against women cannot end until we address its root causes. As we develop new strategies to turn from intervention to prevention, we need to do the following:

- Continue to assure that women’s basic needs for safety are met.
- At the same time, stop looking at violence as a series of isolated incidents.
- Look instead at the root causes of violence to understand how social and cultural systems allow violence to happen in the first place.

Ending violence against women is a daunting task that will take generations to achieve. The steps we take today to engage communities and change cultural norms and institutions are necessary to move us ever closer to preventing violence tomorrow. It is critically important to develop strategies that not only serve to intervene, but also help to systematically erase the future use of violence.

As this trail continues to be blazed, we share the lessons learned along the way, because the possibilities are infinitely hopeful.
Addressing the root causes of violence against women will require that the movement look first to survivors and their communities, giving them the voice and power to inform policy decisions more effectively.

The Ms. Foundation for Women supports a group of advocates, organizers, and service providers who believe that the movement to end violence against women will be vastly more effective with greater participation, coordination, and input from diverse groups across race, class, sexual orientation, and geographic boundaries. Together, we are beginning to explore how the policies of today’s antiviolence movement can be expanded to address a nation of women and their communities that is profoundly more diverse than 30 years ago.

We are excited by the many promising strategies that are possible within a broader framework of safety and justice for all women.

Grantee examples include the following:

- A group of young women of color organize a campaign in their neighborhood against sexual abuse by police officers. The young women produce a video about this problem to create awareness among community members and develop ways to keep women safe, such as safety teams for women returning home late.

- Networks of family, friends, and neighbors in diverse communities teach themselves to mobilize in familiar settings such as places of worship, youth centers, community storefronts, outdoor markets, libraries, and schools. These networks address violence at their doorsteps and develop a shared sense of responsibility for violence prevention. For example, women create and distribute digital stories about their experiences.

- Men from all walks of life march in their town parade to denounce domestic violence, spread the message to other men, and utilize their trade skills to build a walk-in playhouse for children in the local battered women’s shelter.

Three funding themes. As we seek to engage communities in preventing violence against women, the Ms. Foundation is organizing its funding around three large themes, each of which encompasses an interrelated set of grant activities and learning objectives. We believe that:

1. Prevention of gender violence requires examination of gender roles. Working with men on issues of gender violence is a missing link to advancing women’s lives. By allowing all genders and sexual identities to achieve full humanity without violence at the core, we will be
significantly closer to ending men’s use of violence against women.

2. Prevention of gender violence begins with the prevention of child sexual abuse. If we can prevent abuse in its earliest forms, we can significantly reduce the amount of violence that reappears in the lives of adults.

3. Prevention of gender violence involves the development of community-centered strategies. We are supporting expanded options that are driven by and accountable to the community, beyond intervention services and the criminal legal approach. We are interested in how organizations can reach inactive members of their communities and involve them more deeply in this work.

These are three areas that are critical for prevention, but which present some of the toughest challenges in antiviolence work to date, highlighting some of the “missing links” in our practice.

For example, while the antiviolence movement involves women, it is still challenged to work with all women. And while we desire to include all voices to end violence, we need to rule out vigilantism as an option and ensure that the clock is not turned back on women’s rights.

The movement has not even begun to develop large-scale models of how men can be incorporated into the work to end violence against women. Eradicating child sexual abuse as a precursor to cycles of violence poses perhaps the largest hurdle; yet, because child sexual abuse also affects boys and men, successes in this area hold great promise for preventing violence in general.

Each of these areas is discussed in greater detail below, offering examples of what alternatives to intervention can look like and how we can begin to think differently.

Gender Roles: Redefining Strength and Masculinity

The premise. The lives of women and girls are intimately linked with men and boys in our families and communities. Violence against women will never end without significant role changes for men and boys. These changes begin with redefining strength and masculinity.

In this area of our work, we involve a spectrum of collaborators. They include schools that are willing to take a closer look at what needs to change in their learning environments to prevent violence against women. We support youth groups as they attempt to shift their cultures to address sexism and violence, and groups that teach men of all ages to examine their gender roles as a means of activating them as antiviolence advocates. We are planting seeds for a partnership between the women’s antiviolence movement and a growing effort from men to prevent violence.

We learn from and support our grantees as they explore:

- What programs can do to engage diverse communities in understanding the relationship between violence and gender.
How programs can go beyond awareness-raising and individual intervention to changing larger systems and wider communities around gender roles for both women and men.

How women can actively support men in transforming traditional gender roles to end violence.

How men can actively learn from and support the work of women.

**Grantee Highlight**

**Men Can Stop Rape**

“From a very early age, we’re fed a constant diet of unhealthy expectations about what it means to be a man,” says Patrick Lemmon, Co-Founder and Executive Director of Washington, D.C.-based Men Can Stop Rape. “These messages become so commonplace that they feel like the air we breathe, that they are just so natural that it’s not possible to even question them.”

Lemmon and his team help young men recognize and challenge these lessons, the prevailing assumptions about what a “real man” should be. “We want to show young men that they have choices in their lives, that they don’t have to just accept what they are told it means to be a ‘real man’ in this society,” he says. The organization helps young men redefine masculinity by promoting gender equity and building their capacity to be strong without being violent.

Lemmon points to a body of research showing that men often think they are alone in their discomfort with how women are treated and how men are expected to behave, so they don’t talk with their male peers about what they see around them. “Our conversations show young men that most of their peers do not hold negative views of women. They begin to see that if they do speak up, chances are they’re not going to be alone.” He also points to consistent studies showing an intense connection between acceptance of traditional definitions of manhood and negative social outcomes for men and women.

With a grant from the Ms. Foundation for Women, Men Can Stop Rape is building the capacity of young men to examine and redirect themes of violence in their own lives and in their communities. Men Can Stop Rape puts a premium on partnerships with allied organizations, and has program links to organizations such as the DC Rape Crisis Center, Women Empowered Against Violence, and the Boys and Girls Clubs of Greater Washington to stay connected to the work that others in the community are doing.

One of the organization’s key goals is to encourage full institutional involvement in the schools where they work, including administrators, health staff, teachers, and all young men – from the class presidents and football players to the honor students and techies. Lemmon says, “We want everyone to know that they can and must play a role in ending men’s violence.”

**Preventing Child Sexual Abuse**

**The premise.** To prevent violence against adult women, we must prevent the abuse of girls and boys, as child sexual abuse is often associated with patterns of adult violence. In our effort
Men and boys are beginning to redefine gender roles and what constitutes strength and masculinity. They are also bringing the message of nonviolence to their communities, through events such as this town parade in Gloucester, Massachusetts, organized by the Gloucester Men Against Domestic Abuse. The nonviolent majority of men and boys can play a significant role in helping to end violence against women.
to dig deeper at the roots of violence, the Ms. Foundation for Women seeks to address child sexual abuse, a topic considered by most to be too taboo to discuss. For too long, society has asked children to protect themselves rather than placing that responsibility squarely on adults and the community itself. The burden of prevention must shift to adults and away from the children, building a stronger grassroots movement to prevent child sexual abuse.

Through grantmaking, the Ms. Foundation is committed to supporting grassroots prevention, building safety for children at the core of a nurturing family and community. We seek to stimulate public awareness, broader discussion, and social ownership of child sexual abuse, changing the conditions that give rise to the problem.

We are concerned with the following:

■ What community-centered models we can develop that move away from a perpetrator-victim dichotomy to better address the complexities of family and friendship relationships in child sexual abuse situations.

■ How programs can help to create a new family and community context for open dialogue on these issues. Initial work supported by the Ms. Foundation has shown that even the language for talking about this problem may alienate those most directly affected.

■ What networks, collaborative efforts, and infrastructures need to be developed to better advance prevention efforts in this area.

Stop It Now!, a Massachusetts-based organization, was the first to shift how we think about and identify abuser potential. Fran Henry, its founder and former executive director, says that, to stop child sexual abuse, we need to intervene more assertively, get help to adults and children at risk, and build a cultural norm of healthy sexuality.

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**Grantee Highlight**

**Generation Five**

“When people are confronted with the issue of child sexual abuse, they say, ‘It’s awful. It’s hidden. It shouldn’t happen to anyone,’” says Staci Haines, founder and executive director of San Francisco-based Generation Five. “But a different thing happens when they are confronted with an actual incident involving a family or community member. They don’t do anything. Or they’ll go into denial. Or they blame or question whether the kids are telling the truth. People’s actions often don’t line up with what they say their values are.”

Without alternative options, says Haines, too many people pretend nothing is happening, minimize the impact, or blame the victim for bringing shame to the family or community.

For people with limited economic means or those who are under threat of deportation, jeopardizing their relationship with the offender may seem like a grave material risk. And for people from all cultures and classes, the emotional and personal obstacles to reporting abuse can be just as great.
“What we find is that people are not going to the criminal justice system,” says Haines. “This indicates that public systems are just not a viable means for addressing root causes and finding solutions to child sexual abuse.”

To begin developing some best practice models, Generation Five has launched a community response project that focuses on building leadership in communities and agencies. Working with teams of five to six people, Generation Five supports each of them in a specific community organizing project designed to increase community participation in ending child sexual abuse. This approach gives participants hands-on experience and helps Generation Five develop and evaluate local models and policies that can be adapted to other communities. Currently, the community response project is being offered in the San Francisco Bay Area and New York City.

Generation Five in San Francisco works to end child sexual abuse within five generations. Their community response training project teaches activists to respond to and prevent child sexual abuse in networks of family, friends, and neighbors, as well as through community groups. At the end of this training, in sessions such as the one shown, participants develop community action projects. These projects are designed to help prevent child sexual abuse today and to become building blocks for the next generation of work.
Community-Centered Strategies: Re-Envisioning Accountability

The premise. Lasting solutions to ending violence against women start with community members as core agents for creating change. Strategies must support rather than deplete the power of communities to address violence holistically. Law enforcement approaches must be informed and balanced by strategies driven by and accountable to the community. These strategies will include alternatives that prioritize the prevention and reduction of violence rather than deterrence through threat of punishment or punishment after violence has occurred.

We support community efforts that explore:

- Key characteristics of community-based programs that keep women and children safe and hold abusers accountable, without calling for longer, more punitive criminal punishments.
- Models for working together across issues and communities, which are based on social justice principles. Examples include collaborations between women’s antiviolence organizations and groups organizing together around criminal and social justice issues.
- Systems that look at violence as one part of a spectrum of problems, actively balancing response to perpetrator violence with the needs and priorities of diverse communities.

Programs that amplify new voices and diverse leadership.

Grantee Highlight
Communities Against Rape and Abuse (CARA)

Based in Seattle, Washington, CARA was founded in 2000 to generate community awareness and action against sexual violence.

CARA’s programs transcend the idea of simply holding an abusive community member responsible for his or her actions. They help engage a wider circle of community members in taking responsibility for creating policies that can lessen violence against women and change its cultural acceptance.

To do this, CARA has developed an education tool that helps communities talk about the nature of punishment and accountability. This tool encourages community groups to think critically about the values they want to exercise while addressing violence.

One community group confronted with how to hold an abuser accountable for his actions used the CARA tool to reflect on how the prison system parallels abuser relationships by perpetuating abuse and torture. They were able to develop a strategy for keeping the survivor safe and holding the abuser accountable to the survivor as well as to the organization without calling the police. At the same time, they changed organizational policies to transform the organizational culture and prevent future violence.
The Ms. Foundation for Women prides itself on asking difficult questions and putting funding behind projects that are the first of their kind or viewed as unconventional. We do this because we know that this approach pays off – that when we risk voicing concerns that are potentially unpopular or when we venture into language that describes our circumstances in different ways, we prompt consideration of and action on new possibilities. These risks can create momentous shifts in the movement, allowing it to mature and to become stronger.

We consider it our responsibility, as a “first in” funder to inform our colleagues and funders on issues and strategies being tested in the field. What follows is a brief list of what we, our grantees, and our colleagues consider hallmark considerations for building out the work described in this report.

1. Recognize services as just one part of a broad spectrum, and not as separate from advocacy. One grantee who spearheaded the shelter movement asks funders to talk with a number of antiviolence organizations about the activities that are most in need of support, and to realize that many of these organizations are losing trained staff to burnout and financial pressures. Encouraging the shelter movement to activate its constituencies to become advocates in the antiviolence movement can re-energize staff and enable shelters and service providers to tap into new sources of support and to build a prevention agenda.

2. Recognize child sexual abuse as the beginning of a continuum of abuse. As many as 25% of adult women are sexually abused as children, with abuse histories as high as 40% among public assistance recipients. Child sexual abuse is highly correlated with problems of drug abuse and other health factors, triggering a lifetime of adverse social conditions that contribute to violence.

3. Include opportunities for offender accountability and restitution. The traditional response to offenders has been a punitive one, offering little in the majority of situations in which the offender is someone in or close to the family. Without a way to heal the survivor, the family, and the community, along with reconciling their experiences with the offender, we cannot complete the path to prevention. While this is a sensitive area, we can challenge old practices to create a prevention plan that has a role for everyone.

4. Put resources into developing a base-building model. Long-term antiviolence work requires a solid base and models for organizing constituencies that are culturally specific. Grantees are building their knowledge bases of different com-

Communities in various ways, from collaborative research and surveys, to developing databases of organizations, survivors, agencies, and advocacy groups. Grantees have also found that learning about base-building strategies of colleague organizations allows them to customize, analyze, and select those that might work best in their own efforts.

5. Provide intensive training in community organizing. “Since many of the field’s leaders come from service backgrounds, they don’t know how to organize,” one grantee has observed. To move from intervention to prevention and to create long-term change, we need to build the capacity to use community organizing as a strategy. Developing leaders with both grassroots relationships and organizing experience is imperative.

6. Mentor and train diverse leaders. Building leadership that reflects the nation’s diverse communities will strengthen and advance the movement. Our grantees challenge themselves to find better ways to identify and nurture local champions for antiviolence work and to better understand that the process of relationship-building often takes more time than expected.

7. Be careful not to pigeonhole women of color groups. Being an organization led by women of color does not mean it is only about women of color. These organizations need to name issues and name their complexities in order to make the overall movement more effective. The perspectives of women of color benefit all women.

8. Create an agenda that everyone can plug into. This implies supporting accessible discussions among a wide array of community members, abuse survivors, advocates, and professionals to explore how they might increase collaboration. It also implies that antiviolence advocates will have to improve networking and communications capacity even with one another, consistently sharing information and evaluating strategies.

9. Give full weight to new voices. Space needs to be created for those who come to this issue through lived experiences and concern for their community.

10. Understand that building a widespread movement to end violence is not merely facilitating a networking of like-minded professionals. Institutional change cannot happen without the people whose lives are most affected. Engaging the leadership of people for whom this is not their paid job will also require different ways of organizing the work.

11. Make public education and action a priority as we engage larger numbers of people. According to several grantees, communities must be provided with ample learning opportunities about the continuum of abuse, the sources and root causes of violence, and the links between state-sponsored policies that can result in community violence. Community members also need places where they can process and act on this information, such as community storefronts, housing complexes, youth centers, schools, and libraries.
12. Determine who is making decisions, and how survivors of violence and community members are involved. Evaluate to what extent women have control over the decisions affecting their lives. One evaluation query that can gauge the success of the community-accountability effort is this: “Are women being brought together to participate democratically and to struggle with their various viewpoints?” According to Susan Schecter, in her classic work Women and Male Violence, if women gain new skills and a sense of power by working together on behalf of all women, then new strength and energy is brought to the movement.

13. Develop clear benchmarks and a practical timetable. Activists sometimes create unrealistic deadlines and goals, creating impractical timelines and intense pressure under which to work. This pace and pressure often undermine effective antiviolence community organizing.

14. Be innovative. Groups doing community accountability work to end violence may not sound like mainstream groups in this field. To support this approach, funders will have to take chances and be prepared for the reality that not all projects will be successful. At the same time, however, some breakthrough learning and best practices will result. It means protecting grantees’ risk-taking and also withholding judgment as they ask what may at first be perceived as unpopular or even irrelevant questions.

15. Consider a small grant rather than no grant. While our grantees are not encouraging smaller grants, they do urge funders to understand how even small grants, when delivered strategically and perhaps along with other nonmonetary support, can provide a starting point for incredibly effective work.

Please join us in a remarkable venture that we are convinced will unleash the power of women in unprecedented and lasting ways.
Profile of the Safety Program

Over the past 30 years, society has made great strides in recognizing gender-based violence, healing the lives of women and girls in its aftermath with the assistance of domestic violence shelters and sexual assault programs. These achievements are critical, but not nearly enough. We have done a good job at intervening, but we have yet to make similar strides in preventing violence against women.

Gender violence is omnipresent. It is alarming that women everywhere have factored it into every aspect of their daily lives, with numerous self-protection strategies that have become routine and automatic, such as having keys ready to open the door or using a man’s voice on the answering machine.

Grants. The Ms. Foundation for Women, which is at the forefront of the women’s movement and the issues it addresses, takes a highly innovative approach to grantmaking. In identifying partners and grantees on gender violence, we seek models of community-centered, rather than agency-driven, strategies.

Our approach to ending gender-based violence begins within the community because that is where we build our core relationships and view of the world, and that is where lasting change happens. We look for work that emphasizes significant engagement of survivors and marginalized communities to actively change the conditions that give rise to violence. Recognizing that some of this work is in its beginning stages, we fund both tested models and new approaches.

Our Safety Program grantees receive an array of funding, training, technical assistance, and conference or meeting opportunities. We commit an average of $20,000 to $40,000 to each of our grantees, along with a “grants plus” package that includes the following:

Networking. This component of our support allows grantees working on similar issues to share strategies and exchange best practices. Ample time for networking and technical training is always included during grantee conferences, which often leads to their future collaboration. During these meetings, we discuss specific strategies for what it means to integrate themes of community engagement and accountability into our antiviolence work.

Technical assistance. The Ms. Foundation has learned through more than 32 years of grantmaking that community organizations involved in cutting edge work require substantial organizational and programmatic assistance. The Safety Program provides tailored technical assistance to grantees, helping them to design and evaluate their efforts and to sustain their institutions. To do this, we offer our own in-house consultants as well as the option of retaining local technical assistance.
providers. In addition, we provide assistance around specific needs such as leadership development and community organizing.

**Peer-to-peer training.** The Safety Program brokers peer-to-peer exchanges, whereby grantee organizations receive a travel stipend and honorarium to allow them to spend time at each others’ organizations. This kind of assistance helps grantees to gain a deeper understanding of one another’s work and to identify opportunities for collaboration.

Peer-to-peer exchanges produce significant results.

In one example, a grantee working with Atlanta’s South Asian communities incorporated concepts of how bystanders can play a role in interrupting violence, a form of community accountability learned from a fellow safety grantee.

In another example, a working partnership developed between a grantee serving a working class, predominantly Caucasian, men’s group in Massachusetts and a grantee serving a racially mixed community in Brooklyn, to develop strategies for advancing men’s efforts in each community.

**Expanded outreach.** The Safety Program helps grantees gain exposure for their work with other activists and in the donor community by including opportunities to present their work at panels and conferences.

Over the last five years, we have become convinced that community-based strategies will hold the key to preventing violence before it starts. The next generation of work will involve new roles for community members, including men, in building our communities’ capacity for addressing violence.

By sharing initial strategies and ideas with others in the field, as well as with interested members of the public, we can increase the numbers working to create a more equitable, violence-free society.
Grantees

FY 2005

Amnesty International USA
New York, NY

Asian and Pacific Islander Health Forum
San Francisco, CA

Bay Area Collaborative United to Prevent
Child Sexual Abuse
Antioch, CA

The Black Church and Domestic
Violence Institute
Atlanta, GA

Center for Family Policy and Practice
Madison, WI

Center for the Study of Sport in Society
Boston, MA

Center for Young Women’s Development
San Francisco, CA

Close to Home
Dorchester, MA

Creative Interventions
Oakland, CA

East End Community Services Corporation
Dayton, OH

Eastern Kentucky University
Richmond, KY

Family Violence and Rape Crisis Services
Pittsburgh, PA

Family Violence Prevention Fund
San Francisco, CA

Generation Five
San Francisco, CA

HOMEY
San Francisco, CA

INCITE! Women of Color Against Violence
Brooklyn, NY

Louisiana Coalition Against Domestic Violence
Baton Rouge, LA

Men Can Stop Rape
Washington, DC

National Coalition of Anti-Violence Programs
New York, NY

National Organization of Sisters of Color
Ending Sexual Assault
Canton, CT

New York City Community Response
Brooklyn, NY

Northwest Network of Bisexual, Trans, Lesbian
and Gay Survivors of Abuse
Seattle, WA

Raksha, Inc.
Atlanta, GA

Safe Zone
Honolulu, HI

Stop It Now! – Joseph J. Peters Institute
Philadelphia, PA

Strategies Against Violence Everywhere
Columbus, OH

Texas Association Against Sexual Assault
Austin, TX

Texas Council on Family Violence
Austin, TX

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Communities Against Rape and Abuse
Seattle, WA

Generation Five
San Francisco, CA

Gloucester Men Against Domestic Violence
Gloucester, MA

INCITE! Women of Color Against Violence
Ann Arbor, MI

Men Can Stop Rape
Washington, DC

The National Child Assault Prevention Project
Sewell, NJ

The Pennsylvania Coalition Against Domestic Violence
Harrisburg, PA

Raksha, Inc.
Atlanta, GA

Sista II Sista
Brooklyn, NY

Texas Council on Family Violence
Austin, TX

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*Patricia Eng has been a dynamic advocate of the work represented in this report and is largely responsible for the production of this publication. The foundation thanks her for her many years of service and salutes her steadfast commitment to ending violence against women and girls in this nation and throughout the world.

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22
The Ms. Foundation for Women

The Ms. Foundation for Women is the first and leading national women’s philanthropy. We lift women’s and girls’ voices and promote their power to create a more equitable society.

Each year, the Ms. Foundation provides approximately $4 million in grants and practical training to community-based and national activist women’s organizations throughout the United States.

Our support makes these organizations stronger and more capable of driving social change and public policy advances in the areas of health and safety, economic security, and women’s and girls’ leadership.

Our Mission

The Ms. Foundation supports the efforts of women and girls to govern their own lives and influence the world around them. Through its leadership, expertise, and financial support, the Foundation champions an equitable society by effecting change in public consciousness, law, philanthropy, and social policy.

Beliefs and Values

Our work is guided by our vision of a just and safe world where power and possibility are not limited by gender, race, class, sexual orientation, disability or age. We believe that equity and inclusion are the cornerstones of a true democracy in which the worth and dignity of every person are valued.